

THE GIRL HANGING BY ONE FOOT

By **Jacob Clifton** | Aired on 11.23.2007

Razor - Major Kendra Shaw remembers [Admiral Helena Cain](#), the *Pegasus*, the attacks and everything after. Then she kills herself, and God.

Recaplet: Back before New Caprica and Season Three, when *Pegasus* was still flying, Apollo had a CAG named Kendra Shaw. Admiral Cain's favorite, a first-hand witness to the excesses of the *Pegasus*, and pretty much the Cain-flavored version of Starbuck, Shaw was: present for the attack on the Colonies, for Cain's summary execution of her friend and XO, directly responsible for the massacre on the *Scylla*, and implicated in the consequences for her discovery that Cain's lover, Gina, is a Cylon operative. By the time she catches up to the main timeline and becomes Apollo's XO, she's also a heroin addict and serious malcontent. You can't really blame her. I started asking for hard drugs about twenty minutes in.

Apollo sends Shaw and Starbuck out to an old Cylon base, which has captured a team of civilian scientists. Turns out Admiral Adama has just forgotten to mention in the last three years that during the first Cylon War, he was privy to the beginning of the experiments that would result later in the creation of the Hybrids that run the Cylon Baseships, and saw the human misery that went into it up close. Despite Lee's best efforts to get Kara killed, Shaw's crazy tactics and propensity for shooting folks in the head means she's the last man left behind. Then things get weird and totally awesome. Shaw learns that Starbuck's actual destiny is to be: the harbinger of the Apocalypse. If Kara Thrace leads humanity to Earth, it will spell the end of humanity. Then, Shaw kills both herself and God.

Only slightly worse and harder to think about than the preceding paragraphs are two facts: Season Four won't start until April, and it might never ever conclude, depending on the writers' strike. So have fun with this one, if you can!

Recap: "You're born, you live and you die. There are no do-overs. No second chances to make things right if you frak them up the first time. Not in this life, anyway." That's Kendra Shaw talking, running a blade along her skin, lightly. Her arm, and her hand.

The knife was a gift. A knife means one thing only, like a gun: to kill, to cut. To remake by destroying. Take all the damages you can do, all the million ways to hurt and cut and kill, action against the enemy, or yourself, and resolve them down to a single principle: the edge of a blade. Take a plane in three or four or more dimensions, all the pain and trouble and fear, and resolve it down to a single line in two dimensions: that's the line of the razor. Danger at its most basic. Without danger, there's no need for anger, and without anger, it's danger that wins. The knife was a gift.

Razor is a hallucination, an unwanted memory: only fair that we begin in post-traumatic stress, in muddled images, sights and sounds, tracing the history of Pegasus from the end of the world and onward, through the war after the end of the world. Pegasus [arrived](#) from nowhere, like the answer to a prayer. Admiral Helena Cain arrived, welcoming us back to humanity -- offering our Fleet the chance to rejoin itself, under her flag. Gaius Baltar arrived in Gina's cell, promising to save her, and put a gun into her hand, and she [gave Cain](#) the death she craved from Starbuck. And everyone on Pegasus died eventually, didn't they? Strung out across the Fleet in one way or another, because they thought they'd never get back. They thought they could not regain humanity, because they were too ashamed of what they'd become. The blood and screams in those walls never did get washed clean. Gina died when her purpose was gone: take away the plan and Six falls apart. [The bomb was a gift. Fisk died](#) at the hands of thugs just like himself. [Garner died](#) because he couldn't remember the difference between humans and machines, and left Lee a watch that was both at once. It was a gift. And because she loved, and was loved, Cain died at the hands of the only person that could ever love her. It was a gift.

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Now, Commander Lee Adama is flying the Pegasus. And it will change him, too. "The Bucket and the Beast," they called them. Pegasus was a gift, too. Between the Bucket and the Beast, between Galactica and Pegasus, between Cain and Abel, or Adama, there's a razor line of difference. Luke 11:49-51, and it's once in a blue moon that I go near the New Testament, but check it: "Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and

persecute: That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation." Between the altar and the temple, well, that's where everything happens. It's where we live, in space; in time, it's our generation that pays. No matter what year you were born in, you're in the generation that pays, because this has all happened before and will happen again, and we slay our prophets as quickly as they come. Between the temple and the altar, there's a razor line of difference.

"Like I said, you make your choices and you live with them," says Kendra Shaw. "And in the end, you are those choices."

I don't think we could have heard this story before now, because when we first met Cain we didn't know how razors happen. We hadn't seen Kara stab a man through the neck and then return to her dinner, adjusting her napkin with blood on her face. We hadn't seen Ellen on Saul's shoulder, asking for her last cocktail. We thought Cain was just crazed, rabid, driven mad by loss and grief; we could never have admitted the worse possibility: that she stayed sane until her dying breath.

Aum bhoor bhuva swahah Tat savitur varenyam Bhargo devasaya dhimahi Dhiyo yohnah prachodayat

We've heard it fifty-five, or a hundred, a thousand times, but we've never really talked about it. Every week begins in prayer.

Oh God! Giver of life, earth and sky That heavenly light which must be worshipped Let us attain the radiance of God May our thoughts bring us ever forward into light

Every week begins in prayer: To burn off what doesn't work, so that we can see more clearly. Joseph Adama, the Caprica lawyer, he said once: "Be good, but not too good." So what happens when your prayers are answered? What happens when you see so clearly that you go blind? What happens when you burn off what doesn't work, and circumstances demand that you keep on burning, until there's nothing left? If you take away everything that a person is, and everything they wanted to be, and

everything they ever were, and everything they ever loved. Orphans still have memory, and love, and dreams: What happens when you take those away, too?

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While Laura Roslin gives the opening remarks, Lee and Kara stand in the wings, waiting for the ceremony. Lee becomes a Commander today, with a younger, brighter, keener ship than his father's: the Battlestar Pegasus. He's brought with him all he really needs, and she's laughing: "I swear you're like a kid on his first day of school." He smiles and asks if she'll make him regret bringing her; she promises to do so at every opportunity. She's not lying. Laura introduces her boy proudly, and he takes the podium, and while he's speaking, we head into the kitchens.

"Eight months ago, the world changed. Our lives changed forever. We found ourselves shouldering responsibilities we never thought we'd have. Duty, honor, service. They're more than words. Those are the guiding principles for those who serve in the military. And recently all have been of short supply on this ship. That's gonna change, beginning today. We can't always choose our circumstances but we can choose how we handle them. I intend to give you my all, I expect nothing less in return."

Kendra -- a name like Kara, or Kat, or Kore, a name that means she's a girl who goes down into hell and comes back out again, or tries; a name that means we can be reborn, always, that there's not a dimension that doesn't include redemption, a name that means all this is a story she's telling herself -- throws the knife with deadly aim, and it sticks in the wall. She speaks softly to her kitchen mate Gus, gives her plus ça change that means Adama is just another person who isn't Cain. Just another reformer who doesn't understand the blood in the walls, what it still demands. Somebody who's never seen the temple or the altar. Lee names Kara Thrace his acting CAG, and begins to speak of administration; she turns the radio off and Gus leaves, and she's alone. And in the back there, at the other end of the chef's table, there's a canister, among other jars and canisters, and inside that canister is the solution to memory. If a razor is a line, two dimensions, then a syringe needle is a point: when even the line of your existence is too painful, there's always one less dimension. Her eyes roll up, and she is even quieter, even more

still. A single point. You can hear the screaming of the Scylla, and the bodies pile up; it's an unwanted memory, so it's only fair that we begin in post-traumatic stress, in muddled images, sights and sounds, telling Scylla in a way that doesn't include Kendra at all.

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Kendra's story is a repeated summoning: she's constantly showing up at her appointments, showing up for fate, a few seconds late, or wearing the wrong clothes, or too angry to speak. She's being summoned now to the new Commander Adama's offices, so the story can begin. In the hall, she and Kara are nasty with each other. That's how you know Kara will love her by the end. "Lieutenant Kendra Shaw reporting as ordered, sir," she says, refusing to sit even when he asks. "Admiral Cain apparently wasn't big on chairs," he grins. Why would she be? Why sit when you never know who's coming to hurt you next? Why give your body the moment of rest when you know it'll only rebel harder the next time? Why show yourself the luxury of sitting, when you will ask others to stand, and stand, and stand? "Even dead, the woman casts a shadow. I'm sure I don't have to tell you that. ...I've been reviewing the fitreps for the ship's officers and...frankly, you're a puzzle. Top ratings from Cain, clearly thought the world of you. Then a whole series of increasingly negative reports from Fisk, and Garner, who demoted you to kitchen duty for...persistent insubordinate behavior. So, the question is: who are you?"

That's a good question. The problem is that the answer keeps getting smaller and smaller. She used to work for the Ministry of Defense, but her mother's last act was to get her a job as aide to one of the best Admirals in the Fleet. She used to be a daughter, but her mother died. She used to be a girl. Ten months ago, in the pre-"[Downloaded](#)" timeframe, she was a girl on Raptor 179er, staring up at Battlestar Pegasus, docked in the Scorpion Fleet shipyards, shining like a beacon. She used to be a girl, growing up planetside, and now she's a woman heading toward one of the greatest ships in the Fleet, about to start the greatest leap in her career.

Admiral Helena Cain walks the treadmill, reading specs. She used to be a daughter, too, but the First Cylon War took that away. What she learned was that the next surprise is always coming,

that the universe will always figure out a way to teach you new loneliness. So Helena stopped letting people in, and she stopped sitting in chairs, and now she's on a treadmill. Her friend and XO, Jürgen Belzen, a young go-getter with a beautiful smile, is as close as she gets. He's a husband and a father, for now, and he worries about her. His family wants to include her, and she resists, and he will never understand why, because his story isn't hers. The more he pushes, the more she fears it, but she knows enough to know that it's kindness speaking, and she can't answer. He makes fun of her for reading on the treadmill when she could be vacationing, and she in turn laughs at his hobby, paragliding. A woman so accustomed to danger that it seethes in her blood, a woman so strong and ready for the next disaster, could never understand this adrenaline addiction: why risk death on your off-times, when death will come eventually anyway?

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Jürgen invites Helena home with him to Geminon, and she says she's thinking of visiting friends on Tauron. The family she's managed to create in the wake of disaster; the way only orphans can connect. I don't believe she intends to do either. She begs off all commitments, protesting a repair list as long as her arm, a downed network; he calls her "Helena" and chides her for "going full tilt" for over a year now. He promises her she's allowed to get off the treadmill any time she likes; her fault is that she can't. She lies and promises to think about it, but the second he leaves, she tilts forward again, running faster and faster. On our off-times, we act out what we really want: she's already running from something. She has no idea how far she'll soon be running.

Shaw disembarks her golden Raptor 179 and is soundly ignored by all. On Pegasus you either get it or you don't, and the fastest distance between the two points, between the temple and the altar, is to figure it out for yourself. That's Cain's Law. She wanders, eventually coming upon a civilian contractor named Gina. She's so healthy, and beautiful, with such a winning smile; she's so friendly, and kind. Gina is working steadily, but doesn't understand Cain's Law. Not yet. "Looking for the CIC? You've got that 'new officer meaning to report to her CO' look down cold." Gina produces a clipboard chock full of ship schematics -- "one of the benefits of being a network administrator" -- and traces out a path for Kendra to follow. Gina traces out the path we all follow,

and she's the first one to walk it. From the temple to the altar. They introduce themselves, already feeling the chemistry; already knowing they like each other. Gina's name is "Inviere," which Kendra recognizes -- "one of the benefits of being a lapsed Classics major" -- as Old Geminese for "Resurrection." Gina smiles, allowing as how you never know when something like that might come in handy. She's right: it's a clue and a message, but nobody can see it yet. At the end of Gina Inviere's story there is an end of line; there's no resurrection for her, but she doesn't know that yet. So she breathes, and goes back to her work. Her work is the destruction of humanity, but it's not as glamorous as it sounds.

Kendra reports to CIC, and Helena immediately asks if she enjoyed her coffee. "Just say yes, so we don't get off from the wrong foot." To Kendra's credit, she does. "Good! You see, because I figured that you either got lost on your way to CIC or you stopped for a cup of coffee and frankly, I'd rather think it was a cup of coffee than realize my new aide can't find her way around a Battlestar." Belzen smiles, secretly; Fisk nearly giggles at his station. One of the saddest things about this story is Fisk's capacity for joy, so surprising throughout, and so inevitably destroyed. Fisk's weakness, it's something we knew about but never saw so clearly as in this story. Simple weakness, like Gaius's; the cause of so much misery. And the only thing more terrible than Fisk's weakness is the strength of everybody else. Kendra begins to apologize and Helena cuts her short, like a razor: "I'm not finished speaking. I know why you're here. You're here because you think this job is a stepping stone to a still better one. So let me guess, you had your mother pull some strings. And she --" Kendra interrupts, warning Helena: her mother died of cancer. Helena is unimpressed: her mother died in fire. "While I'm very sorry for your loss, you'd be well advised to make that the last time you play on my sympathies." Helena creates a story about Cain, becomes a legend every day she walks these halls: the woman without fear, without sympathy, without anything but will. This is how our legacies are made: by the stories that we spread, about ourselves. When it's propaganda you can control it, but like the man said: be careful what you pretend to be, because you are what you pretend to be. Helena sends Hoshi off with the mostly terrified Kendra; she and Belzen laugh. "A little mid-morning snack." Kendra won't make

these mistakes again; she'll make new ones, and be punished, and new ones again, and eventually she'll run out of mistakes. Cain's Law.

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Hoshi explains, as they walk, about the ship's network systems: with the right passcode, you can control just about any part of the ship from any other. When the systems are online, you could operate the whole ship from any point, see. Like a magic spell, or a true name: all you need is the passcode, and you could make the weapons grid ignore everyone's commands, say, or open your doors to the wolves outside, or within. Kendra cracks that this is fine as long as nobody hits the wrong button, and Hoshi isn't even amused: "Yeah, not on Cain's ship." Point taken. Kendra begins to notice the ways that Cain puts the fear of the Gods into her men, but barely finishes the thought before the Gods strike. The corridor goes sideways, and she sleeps for a moment; on waking, she delicately plucks Hoshi's hand from her wrist, where he grabbed at her, to save her, before being knocked unconscious himself. It's a tiny moment, a little note, but I like it. As the world ended, the Pegasus crew reached out to each other, not in words but in swift movement. Helena comes running through the wreckage, the smoke and steam and flashing light. She looks like she's dancing. Her voice when she reaches Kendra is funny, slogging sluggish through Kendra's concussion: "Are you okay?" Helena rears back, slapping Kendra hard across the face, giving her a name: "Come on, soldier." This is love, this is the beginning of love. She drags Kendra to her feet, and tries to rouse Hoshi. We know he's alive, because we'll get to know him later, but there are no such guarantees for Helena or Kendra: they leave him behind and head to CIC.

Raiders rain down on the Fleet shipyards. I think the easiest mistake in the world is to -- at the moment you recognize the flashbacks, as they come -- throw up your hands and say, "I know this story." The whole point of this movie is to tell you that you don't, and never did: it's a story that plays out in faces. It could be boring to hear or see the same stories we already know, so you have to come in at a different angle: not the horrors and the acts, but the faces and the feelings behind the horrors and the acts. That's the story here. Well, and space porn, which is why I mention it here. The end of the Colonies is something we've

talked about every second of every day, because it's the singularity, the sharp point of the needle, the 9/11 where everything starts over in a new world where everything has changed. It's the first domino, it's the rock that sends you off into the hard places. I did not know how beautiful it was. Flames bloom in the shipyards, like a garden of death; where the rain of Raiders falls, death is sown, and it is beautiful, and it is terrible. I feel like I'm learning things about science fiction just sitting here.

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Fisk is down, on the CIC deck: only those people who will never be razors are allowed to fall in the first attack. Kendra could have gone one way, but she went the other. For the moment she slept, she was on the razor's edge, but Helena saved her and woke her to fire, like a fairy tale. It was a gift. Belzen seals off hatches, compartments, locates radiologicals that say this is nuclear, and Helena fills in the blanks. "It's the Cylons. It has to be. They've broken the Armistice and sparked an all-out attack." Just like she always knew they would. Just like every nightmare coming true at once, like every dream and unwanted memory and fantasy that sends the treadmill up another notch. Her life has been training for this moment, when the walls come down and the world ends, like she's always knew it would. Power's on, but that's about it: dradis is erratic, weapons offline, computers are kaput. And outside, it's still raining fire. Helena severs the dock connections and the ship pulls away in flame and light. It's a breakaway song, and there's nobody left to hear it, because everyone is dead.

On orders, Kendra spools up FTL for an emergency jump; without computers they could end up inside a star. I'm not saying they won't. Twenty seconds to a double nuclear strike, and Kendra's stalling, afraid of jumping into the abyss. Helena's just been waiting for her chance. Ten seconds, and Helena's getting irritated: "Just frakking do it, Lieutenant!" And all around them, the ships and crews slaughtered and burning, a million deaths a second on a dozen worlds. FTL comes online, and at five seconds to annihilation, they jump. And in the vacuum they leave behind, all the flame follows, and extinguishing itself. I mean to say that Pegasus leaves humanity behind and jumps into the dark places, and draws the fire away with it. "Drawing fire" -- it's an interesting phrase and quite a singular image here. If we're ever held down in a fixed position and I love you, I will jump out and

show them my face, and I will draw their fire.

From Kendra ten months ago, whose face was open, who wanted to please and knew who she was, to Kendra now: a closed knife, click. Quiet and still. Acting-wise, I think this is my favorite scene in the whole thing. Her dignity and will, her curious absence speak volumes, not only in contrast to what we just saw, but in contrast to humanity. If Ada McGrath from *The Piano* ever spoke, it would sound like this. Immovable: "Who am I? I'm a soldier. As were Fisk and Garner. Neither of those men deserve my respect, so they didn't get it." Apollo is wonderful in this scene, the best flavor of Apollo there is: cleverness and wry grins, a tactical and open mind. "Fisk was a black market sellout. He was a piece of garbage, unworthy of the uniform. Garner was a martinet who tried to micromanage this ship like it was some bulky piece of machinery." Apollo agrees, precisely agrees with these, and asks for his own assessment: "Don't hold back just because I've got a pulse." Heh. "You're a step up. But that doesn't change the fact that you're an outsider who was brought in to clean up our mess, or the impression that your daddy just gave you a Battlestar, like he was tossing you the keys to a new car."

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After the tiniest bit of script massage to make us love her, of Lee giving us permission and the command to love her, which is irritating but expected, he invites her to be his new XO. She's a new thing in the universe, but she fits into it well. We've never seen anybody like her, anybody so closed down and dark, but she speaks in the rhythms of the show. (Like Michelle Trachtenberg: say what you will about [Dawn](#), but she was a Buffy character from the first second; she fit into the world really well, like this.) "One thing I learned from my father, before he 'tossed me the keys,' is that a Commander needs a strong right arm. I also need to send a message to this crew, that I respect Cain's legacy. Even if the truth is that I don't." He doesn't, and not because she's crazy: he doesn't respect Cain because she's everything that terrifies him. "I'm no Cain, but I intend to give this crew their pride back." That's Lee, in a nutshell. He offers Kendra the chance to carry Helena's torch for him, the Lie of Cain, and drops Major insignia on the table for her. She takes them and scampers, and he doesn't even really wonder if she'll be good at this, because he knows she will. She demands that he consider his imperative,

positioning the gun over her heart, screaming at him to fire; finally she pulls the trigger herself, and he shifts his pants. She picks up the missing piece and shows it to him: "Again." Out in the corridor, Adama's kind of scared of her. "Didn't think it possible you could find an XO meaner than Saul Tigh." Lee agrees that she's tough, but knows that's what is necessary for this ship, at this time. He tells his father that the only real conflict is with Kara, of course; Adama laughs and asks for a share in the tickets to that dance. One of the million discarded framing devices for this story was a movie-long conversation between Kendra and Kara. Think about that for a sec.

They walk off down the hall and Adama talks about Lee's relationship to Kendra, now and moving forward, but let's pretend he's talking about Helena and Kendra. It's Michael Taylor, my [very favorite writer](#) on the show (and the only one besides [Anne Cofell-Saunders](#) that I would trust with Helena), so he might as well be, because this whole thing is really just a poem: "Just remember that an XO is not a blunt instrument. The two of you have to make up a team. That takes trust." Kendra's never been a blunt instrument, but by the same token, razors don't trust. But Lee doesn't know about any of this because he will never understand razors, even as he's becoming one. At this point, Lee can say that they trust each other to do their jobs, and that's a start. "Now that your house is in order, I have a mission for you," Adama says. "Against my better judgment, I let a science team take a Raptor from us, go out to study a supernova remnant. They're overdue." Three civilians, two pilots. Adama tells him it's a search and rescue, but as far as getting into a firefight, he should use his judgment: "This is your command." Adama jumps back and forth across that line so many times in this story, it's unbelievable. Or, I mean, it would be, except this is Adama we're talking about. I'm sure it all makes sense to him. And out on the SAR, Starbuck and Showboat are singing "99 Bottles Of Ambrosia." Showboat is the way Kara made her peace with Pegasus, during Garner's time as Commander. Now they sing.

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Some time after the attacks -- we don't know how long quite yet and neither does she -- Kendra's putting CIC back together. Literally, soldering circuit boards into cabinets and connecting wires and breakers. Over at Command, Belzen confirms 723

casualties, more than a quarter of the crew; twelve Vipers gone, some Raptors, seventeen ships beyond repair. Helena flicks her knife open, and closed, confining her nerves to one location, the span of a hand. But Belzen's less sanguine; he wasn't expecting this like she was. "Sir, we've tried to keep a lid on what we learned from comms traffic before it stopped, but rumors keep leaking out." They agree that facts, not supposition, are key here: Cain's Law, again. Not what if or how come, but simple "what happens" and "what happens next." Belzen points out that they're only four or five plotted jumps (my emphasis) from the Colonies. Helena sends two Raptors for recon, told not to engage, and Kendra readies the navigation and defense systems for reboot. Helena notices her, and draws close.

Kendra looks totally fucking nuts, blood on her face, hair worse than even Tory's, after the trial. Just looking like hell, and keeping it together, locked up tight. "Helms, weapons and FTL computer are back online, and I think I know how the Cylons took down our defense grid. These lines of code in the new navigation program were about to upload. They've been designed to create a backdoor that could enable an enemy to wirelessly access the program." Sound familiar? It should. It's not just because we're revisiting things we already know: these words, these particular rhythms, are pointing us toward another memory. Not Gaeta and the networks, not Adama saying no, but before, long before: we're meant to be thinking about Gaius Baltar, about his lover Sarah, down on Caprica. How he fell in love with her, and she fell in love with him, even as she was bringing his world down around him. How many people in Caprica City alone? Seven million. Gaius and Caprica spent a lot of time together in that city, working out the details for the Ministry of Defense. One thing led to the other. He has needs, just like the rest of us. No one can survive entirely on their own, not even Gaius Baltar. Trust me, in the end we're all just human. Even when we're not.

Caprica Six's story continues to work that out: how can you love someone at the same time that you're planning their destruction and extinction? How can you weep for a child after snapping its neck? How can you do both? How do you compensate, without the Chips come calling, telling you everything you need to hear and everything you don't want to hear? I don't know, but I know how you can avoid it: take all that ambiguity and stow it somewhere safe. Ignore the angel altogether, even as she's

begging you to come back to life, and Helena's just a few minutes from figuring that out too. And there's no angel or Chip to help save her.

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"That could introduce a virus that could affect the entire network, right?" Kendra nods: "Luckily, ours was already down but I suggest that we keep it that way even after we've purged the program." Helena gives her leave to continue, noting that "maybe" Kendra's "not quite as useless" as she thought. It's a lie, the Lie of Cain, that says the opposite of what she means: not uselessness disproved, but its opposite. "Maybe you're as special as I thought you were," run through the Cain translator, coming out as Socrata. She asks how long Kendra's been at her station; she doesn't know because she's been at hers just that long, and only now remembered Kendra exists. "I don't know, sir -- I guess I just never left." Cain's Law. "You should consider getting rack time. It's been two days since the attack." Kendra wavers on her pins, sways a little bit: surely two days is enough time to prove that you are crazy, right? Two days without sleeping, eating, sitting? Well, no wonder she feels so fucked up and wild, right? But first, the last task on her list.

"Sir. Sir, I'm sorry. I'm sorry about the way I behaved when the nukes hit. I was scared. Actually, I was terrified, and I froze." Cain appraises her. This whole story takes place in Helena Cain's wonderful, wounded eyes. "You're not afraid anymore, are you, Lieutenant?" No, sir. "Good. You hold on to that anger, and you keep it close. It will stop you being afraid the next time. It'll tell you what to do." She tells the girl to button up, present herself as a soldier, turn back into a Lieutenant, click closed, button up.

"Fear gets you killed, and anger keeps you alive." -- Socrata Thrace, Corporal, Colonial Marine Corps. Razor. Forgiven.

In the daytime world, Cain walks the halls, being loved and stared at by the three-quarters of her crew that's left. Cain takes Command; Cain works with Kendra's eyes on her. These are her people. Her people, her imperative. Cain makes plans, solves problems, works out equations. Cain creates life from anger, where there was only fear and death. Cain requires nothing of them that she wouldn't ask of herself, and praises their anger,

and buttons them up.

In the night, Helena walks the morgue, staring in love at the one-quarter of her crew that's gone. Helena falls to her knees; Helena closes the staring eyes of a crewman she didn't save. Helena makes plans, solves problems, works out equations. Helena will create life from anger, erasing fear and death in the name of war. Helena will ask of them nothing that she doesn't ask of herself. Helena's parents drew the fire, so she would be safe, and now she will be Cain. Between the temple and the altar, she will burn away the humanity of her crew, so that humanity will live on. She grieves for them, for the one-quarter, for twelve worlds, for the billion burned and dying children of Gaius Baltar; she grieves for herself, for all the burning she has yet to do. She buttons up; she clicks closed like a knife.

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"Which side are we on? We're on the side of the demons, Chief. We're evil men in the gardens of Paradise. Sent by the forces of death to spread devastation and destruction wherever we go. I'm surprised you didn't know that...I've sent men on suicide missions in two wars now, and let me tell you something. It don't make a Godsdamn bit of difference whether they're riding in a Viper or walking out onto a parade ground, in the end they're just as dead. So take your piety and your moralizing and your high-minded principles, and stick 'em someplace safe." -- Colonel Saul Tigh, Executive Officer, Galactica. Cylon, Terrorist, Murderer. Razor. Forgiven.

Helena breathes, takes up the PA, and tells a lie. "This is your Admiral. I know there have been a lot of rumors going around about the destruction that's been visited on our homeworlds by the Cylons. I would like to tell you that they're exaggerations, but in fact, they don't even come close to conveying the horror that's just been unleashed among us. The facts are that our Colonies have been destroyed, our cities have been nuked, and our Fleet's gone too. So far, there are no indications of any other survivors. I imagine you're all asking yourselves the same question I am: What do we do now? Do we run? Do we hide? I think those are the easy choices." And in their time, the Galactica will do both, again and again. And any time they make the easy choice, they are punished, horribly.

"A philosopher once said: 'When faced with untenable alternatives, you should consider your imperative.' Look around you. Our imperative is right here. In our bulkheads, in our planes, in our guns, and in ourselves. War is our imperative." It's funny, because it's lexically not that far from what I am always saying in these recaps, which is: Where do you go, what do you do when you can't get out? You turn into something else. And that's all she is doing, and she would never ask of anybody something that she wouldn't do first herself.

"And if right now, victory seems like an impossibility, then there is something else to reach for. Revenge. Payback. And so, we will fight. Because in the end, it's the only alternative our enemies have left us. I say let's make these murdering things understand that as long as this crew and this ship survive that this war that they started will not be over. Thank you."

If you could see time, if you could see everything at once, like a Hybrid, you could pick up your projection and set it down again, anywhere you wanted. And you might set down on Galactica, and if you did, you'd hear things, because what's going on at precisely this moment is that Adama is talking. And here's what he's saying: "Mourn Caprica later. Right now, the most important thing you can do is get this ship into the fight." And the Secretary of Education is asking whether anyone's discussed the possibility of surrender, and learning that it was the President's first and last move.

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Adama is saying, "After today -- after using nuclear weapons against defenseless civilians, after murdering people by the millions -- I don't give a damn who the Cylons are now or what the 'truth' is about their souls. All I know is that they're murderers and killers and they're trying to destroy us. So today's gonna be the first day of a new war."

Adama's saying, "Are they the lucky ones? That's the question you're all asking yourselves, isn't it? We're a long way from home. We've jumped far beyond the Red Line and now we're in uncharted space. Limited supplies. Limited fuel. No allies. No hope. Maybe it would've been better if we'd all died quickly back there on Kobol with the rest of our families than to die slowly out

here in the emptiness of deep space. Where will we go? What will we do?"

At precisely this moment, the Priestess Elosha is telling of the Thirteenth Tribe, now living on Earth, "which circled a distant and unknown star." And Adama is taking a breath, and telling a lie: "It's not unknown. I know where it is... The location -- or at least the general location -- of this star system was known to only the most senior commanders in the Fleet. We dared not reveal its location to the public while the Cylon threat was still out there. And thank the Lords for that, because now we have a refuge to go to, a refuge the Cylons know nothing about. It won't be easy. It will be a long and probably arduous journey to get there. But I promise you one thing -- we will make it and Earth will be our new home."

Two lies. Between Nietzsche's Will To Power and Freud's Will To Pleasure there is a third way: Frankl's Will To Meaning. It kept him alive, a whole new system of thought, in the Nazi camps, giving voice to his will to survive: the will to meaning, that any story can be borne if you turn it into story. Into the Lie of Earth, or the Lie of War. There is no Earth and there is no victory, in these speeches that are taking place at the exact same time, on two Battlestars as far from each other as the temple and the altar. Existentialism is one of those words that gets thrown around a lot, but the shortest definition is this: the will to meaning is more powerful than the content of the meaning it describes. Earth and War are equal endpoints, because what keeps you alive, what gives you survival and meaning, is the journey toward them. Adama flirts with the lie of war, but -- because of Laura and Tigh, because of Kara, most of all because of Lee -- chooses the lie of Earth. Heaven for everybody. This is born of what and who he is, which is a dove masquerading as a hawk; a man who can't forget beauty, who will never be a razor. But at the same angle of approach, with that same will to meaning, the lie of war is born of the woman Helena Cain is: an orphan of the war who waits for the next bomb to hit. A hawk that must reject the very idea of doves, or die of jealousy. The temple and the altar, salvation and sacrifice, Earth or war. These are gifts.

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It starts on the deck and spreads around the ship: So say we all,

so say we all. Gina stands with her clipboard, off to the side, in the center of the scariest place in the universe, and against her will she raises a fist, and says it too. On CIC, finally, as they hear it coming on the wireless from all over the ship, they repeat: So say we all, so say we all. Kendra loudest, then Fisk. This would be the first time I started crying. "So say we all" is one of those phrases that accretes meaning, and only gets pulled out with the big guns. "So say we all" means "Amen," means "Aum," means family and your imperative, means we wipe away the salt and embrace, that we are united in purpose. We start every week with a prayer, for wisdom and for the radiance of heaven, and every week you could say, "So say we all," and that is fitting in war. But she says war, death, murder, sacrilege, destruction, inhumanity, desecration, horror; you say abomination, and they say, "Amen." This is the invocation of darkness, sealed with holy words. I hope it turned to ashes in their mouths. I don't believe in damnation, I don't believe any of us are beyond salvation, or repair. But: if I did, this is when it happens.

Is she crazy yet? They don't seem to think so. I don't think she ever goes crazy, but just to make sure, she needs to gather her people together -- the ones she can rely on, if not trust -- and explain she didn't really mean it. That she knows it's a lie. That she would never ask of them anything she wouldn't do to herself. Fisk, Belzen, and Shaw join Helena in her quarters, discussing plans before dinner, noting the comms relay that we know will end in Belzen's death. Guarded by a half-thousand Raiders. "They don't expect anyone to attack it," Helena says brightly. "Gentlemen, you're looking at our first target." She congratulates Shaw on spotting it, and she admits she had help, and Gina enters, dressed for dinner. "Speak of the devil! Hello, Gina, welcome." They embrace. A light bulb goes off over Kendra's head: Helena Cain is capable of love, because this is love. This is love: "Gentlemen, I'd like you to meet Miss Gina Inviere. Miss Inviere and Lieutenant Shaw are working very closely upgrading our systems, and before that she was supervising our retrofit. And I must say, she's proven herself invaluable in both capacities." Gina's bashful, skittish, happy, in love. They sit down together, this family of scraps and orphans, and Helena speaks.

"I think it's quite important for our ship's officers to get together every once in a while. Share some food, some wine, some good conversation. Ups morale." Fisk jokes that it's nice to "park [their]

butts on a chair" for once. Cain's Law: no chairs, no rest. Only faster running. "Now that you're all here, I would like to take a moment to say a few words. In all seriousness, I said some things before, in the heat of emotion; things that I thought this crew needed to hear. But I don't want any of you for one moment to think that I would ever risk lives or resources in some mad quest for revenge. My plan is to wage an all-out classic guerilla war campaign. I want to find their weak links, and I want to hit them hard."

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Adama's saying, "No armistice, no peace treaty, no mercy. This time we track them down and kill them. All of them. Until there's not one single Cylon left alive in the universe. And if God has a problem with that, he can sort it out on Judgment Day." Leoben is saying that this is the reason, for all of it: "As long as there's a human race, there's going to be a man out there like you." Or a woman.

"As they say," cutes Gina, "the best defense is a good offense," and they smile sweetly at each other. Fisk toasts the good offense, and "kicking some Cylon ass," and they toast. And Kendra stares around the table, Gina's smile, the warmth of the candles, Helena sipping her wine, Helena sitting in her chair. Helena, capable of love.

Gina and Kendra work easily together, firewalling systems, doing things with relays. Gina sighs, overworked: "I don't know how we could firewall these systems by tomorrow, unless we split up. And you're the only one with the access codes." Kendra almost grins, wryly suggesting that Gina speak to the Admiral about getting better security clearance. Gina blushes. "Here I thought we were being so discreet. Guess that's hard when you truly care for someone." I don't disbelieve her. In a few minutes, we'll see that Helena doesn't either: she explicitly states her authorization of Gina's torture because she knows Gina's capable of emotion, susceptible to it. That Gina is capable of love, just like herself. The program bleeps and Gina asks Kendra to input her code; Kendra pauses and sings it out, like a magic spell, like a true name: "Alpha one niner six gamma one." It's her true name, and that of Pegasus, in this moment; it's Kendra showing her appreciation for the comfort Gina brings Helena, her love of Gina,

her trust after all this in Gina. Her need to be included in the family happening before her eyes: if Gina will love her, then by the transitive property, Helena's capability of love will extend to her too, and Kendra will be a daughter again. A daughter among orphans. "To satisfy your curiosity, we met a few months ago when I presented the plans for the retrofit," Gina smiles, pleased. "We spent a lot of time together working out the details and I guess one thing led to the other." Kendra shakes her head, and grins, but it's only because Helena's -- or is it Cain's? -- self-sufficiency is so legendary. Such a successful piece of marketing. "She has needs, just like the rest of us. No one can survive entirely on their own. Trust me, Lieutenant. In the end, we're all just human." The music goes, unnecessarily, "DOOOOOOOM!" But you know me; Gina loves, so she's just human too, or else "human" has no meaning at all.

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Kara and Showboat sing "99 Bottles Of Ambrosia," on the SAR as before, but at precisely this moment, we see, Kendra is annoyed by Kara's every act. "She ever shut up? Chatter like that breeds sloppiness, it's a bad example to the other pilots." Lee, putting up a Gina front of his own, just says she sets a good example with her flying. Before Kendra can skewer him about true names and his capability to love, though, bogies jump in. Raiders, in an unknown configuration. Out in the sky, Starbuck's calling out, and Apollo calls them back. Apollo orders the defensive batteries to be "selective" in their barrage, to watch out for our people. Starbuck notices something strange about the Raiders, like they're from some crappy '70s sci-fi show; Kendra wants to launch Vipers, even though this is just recon for the SAR, and Apollo tells her to chill. They'll bring the birds home and jump back to Galactica. The SAR gets pinned down -- and meanwhile, Pegasus's navs go down, so Lee's stuck too. Kendra gives an order: full fire, all batteries, close range. Putting Starbuck and Showboat directly in the line of fire; stuck between the temple and the altar, the rock and hard place. They fly back double-time, shooting holes in the offensive to get home. Kara comes in hot, flipping around to take out the Raider that's followed her into the landing bay, screaming profanities; she finally comes to a halt in the bay, with the strange Raider on top of her. It's a funny image.

Starbuck is unable to see the humor in all of this, shouting at Lee

about his XO's crazy-ass strategies, and how she nearly killed them both. And in Kara's defense, usually it's the opposite problem: if Starbuck breaks a nail, Galactica abandons the entire Fleet and risks thousands of lives to get her a Band-Aid. She's understandably confused, then, by the razor action of Kendra, even though it saved her life and everybody else's. Lee reminds her that Kendra's the XO, and asks her not to attack Kendra, but Kara's not hearing that. She starts to scream, and Kendra goes still: "Questioning orders is a bad idea on this ship, Captain."

At the putative Cylon comms relay, Helena's Blue Squad can take on twelve Raiders, for sure. Then at least fifteen squadrons of Raiders jump in. "This isn't a comms relay," she realizes -- it's a staging ground. A trap. Belzen and Fisk scream out warnings: they have to recall their squad and jump before the army hits. But Helena scrambles the reserves and orders them out, to cover Blue while they accomplish their mission. Their total force is outnumbered four to one, but Cain won't budge. The weapons grid goes down, like a sign from the Gods -- although actually, thanks to Gina, and the true name -- that this is a bad idea. This is a trap and Helena knows it. Where do you go when you can't get out? Consider your imperative. The mission is simple: knock out communications for the Cylons. It's a gamble, but for all she knows it could be decisive. They're only Raiders. She orders the gun crews to operate manually, and Belzen tries to reason with her. A trap, an untenable set of circumstances, is all the more reason to hit them as hard as possible.

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Belzen fucks up, coming around to speak quietly. Her first friend, the only friend we know about, the only friend in this story that we know she trusts with her true name. And what he says cuts like a razor: "This is exactly what you said we wouldn't do." What began as a kick-ass move, a sign of trust and power, a stand that could prove her meaning and the meaning of humanity, a guerilla trump card, becomes something horrible: Helena, whispering in her ear. Helena telling Cain that this is also a costly thing. "Even if we succeed, is this really worth the lives the plan would cost?" All of this is too close. Those lives are already lost. This guerilla war is a blind jump. Sam Anders and the C-Bucs never expected to live this long either. He's missing the point, pushing on the bruise, and doing it in front of people. He's become a problem.

He's her family, the only person who knows her true name, and he's betraying her with it. And if we are going to survive, we have to burn off those parts that don't work: those little voices, those Chip Helenas, that say, "No," when every fiber of our being that must say, "Yes, yes," or we'll be swept away by the storm. She demands his sidearm, she fires his own gun into his head. Not her gun, but his. This is a gift. Fisk becomes the XO, picks up the PA phone with a quickness, orders the strike.

Centurions are boarding, so Helena sends Kendra out to damage control, just like in "[Valley Of Darkness](#)". Just like, precisely just like that time: damage control, when the Commander of the ship has gone AWOL, shot through the heart by the enemy, with only a beast behind the wheel, and the demons sneaking in behind your eyes. Sometimes Kendra could be Lee, could believe in good and in strength; this is one of those times. Off to damage control, hiking over bodies, clapping crewmen as they pass. She pulls her gun on Gina, and relaxes; she sends her to CIC, they clasp hands as she's going. Shaw, now alone, watches a Centurion pass. Then, a platinum Six. She thinks a moment, puts it all together just like Adama did, and kills the woman. Up in the wall, there's a security camera.

Back to CIC, gun still drawn. Kendra cocks her gun at Gina and orders her away from the Admiral; sickened by the fact that everything that happens now is her fault. For trusting, for daring to love even a tiny bit, she has caused the betrayal of Helena's one chance at happiness; has given the Fleet cancer with her words. Gina's affronted and surprised, and Cain's unimpressed. "Lieutenant, what the hell is going on? She was helping us with our weapons grid." No, she was killing it. The Cylons look like us, now. All that time turning yourself into a machine so that you could fight machines, and they've been turning themselves into people. You could almost laugh. Cain and Gina do. Kendra hoshis for the security feed and shows them all the dead woman. Helena goes slow and quiet, like a blade snapping shut. "Get that thing off my bridge." The Marines advance on Gina, and she does what she does: snaps a neck. She fires the dead Marine's gun into several more of them, and then takes aim at Helena Cain. She can't fire. When you're a Six, I would imagine it's shameful, to take aim and be unavailable to pull the trigger; it must feel like being taken over by a virus, to feel your body refusing to react to your commands. This is love, and this is a gift. And it's just

enough time for Kendra to advance, silently, and knock Gina out from behind.

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Now, Commander Apollo is sick to death of Starbuck's constant death vendettas against every woman who dared to strength -- who had a name like Kat, or Kara, or Kore -- and how she fights with them in front of people. He calms them down, and then the weird Raider presents itself, on the deck floor, confusing everybody. Tigh, Roslin, and Adama stare at the thing. Gaius is there, although he shouldn't be, because his discovery of the Hybrid is one of the turning points of the series and having him here just makes it messy; Sharon is here, still in her chains. Still a prisoner of war. Roslin wonders why this vessel -- a model that hasn't existed since the First War -- should still be flying. Sharon offers, quietly, from her collar and bounds, that perhaps it's never been resurrected: maybe this Guardian Fleet has been out here all along. Shying away from Roslin and Adama's suspicion, she explains about an urban myth, the Guardians, out on the edge of nothing, early models that somehow avoided being scrapped. Like the Japanese holdouts, still fighting sixty years later, like all of us.

They guard, these Guardians, something precious. Something so taboo you don't even have to avoid talking about it -- it has become myth. Not just the Final Five, off-limits, but actually beyond history for them, like the Scrolls or Earth. The first Hybrid: "An entity that represents the first step in our evolution from pure machines to organic beings. From them, to us." Like a missing link, Apollo suggests. "No, more like an...evolutionary dead-end. There were other Hybrids created to control our Baseships before the experiment was abandoned, but this one was the first, and um, some think it's still alive. Protected by these Guardians." And Adama knows she's right; remembers the cages and the bodies, filthy skin over hideous metal. "And that it's still somehow seeking its own way to evolve." Again, like all of us; the Cylon most of all, most desperately and strongly of all. Adama speaks up: in the last operation of the War, the Galactica took out a Cylon base, rumored to contain the beginnings of a superweapon.

First Cylon War, 41 years ago. William "Husker" Adama enters a rusty old door on the still-unformed Basestar, and sees some shit:

skin over parts, grossness; an arm covered in meat and skin. A resurrection tank, filled with putrid yellow water. Before Cylons looked like us, they dreamed machine dreams and tried desperately to crawl into our skins; invented new systems of thought and emotion, new kinds of humanity, new kinds of life. They discovered resurrection, and the space between life and death. They defined the line, I mean to say, and how to us it looks like a razor, and they jumped over that line with the arrogance of youth, and blurred it out like so much salt. All of this will happen again, but the first time, it happened in this room. Husker is standing in a dusty, bloody nativity: the birthplace of God. This is an abattoir, but it's also the first step on the road to salvation, born of ugly science and uglier magic. Husker stands between the temple and the altar. They are the same location.

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Husker puts down his gun, at the edge, and sticks his hand into the waters of abomination, and he is visited by visions, of the past and the future. People in cages, screaming. Louder and louder, as Husker screams with them. The twisting of the men and the screaming of the women. The hand of the first Hybrid grabs at his wrist, and pulls him closer. Husker is touched by God and then released, and he falls over, gasping. "All this has happened before, and will happen again," rings out a voice from beyond all this, dusty as a hospital ward, tired as Metatron. Comes a knocking, at the hatch opposite, a pounding of fists and shouts, and he approaches. A man's face, maybe a little bit familiar, looks out at him through a grimy porthole. The victims of ugly science, Geminese traders from the captured ship Diana, who watched their fellows taken away one by one; taken apart in the nativity. Diana is the goddess of birth, and of the hunt. The temple and the altar. He tries to free them, and cannot; a younger woman, blonde, reaches through the gap. As the Basestar begins to undock, to retreat behind the line, the victims tell him to scramble, to tell their story and the stories of what's happened here. The room shakes and disaster looms; Husker leaves. Outside in the snow, clean and white after all that blood and dirt and death, he learns the war is over. It's Armistice Day. He can't do anything about the victims, or the experiments, or the horror he's just witnessed, but the War is over, and he lives on. And now, forty years later, some glitch in the system has kept the Guardians going, like Onoda and Uwano. The Guardians go

on, taking people when they can, performing their horrors, making new life. Laboring senselessly toward God.

Adama and Roslin agree that Lee and the Pegasus will find and destroy this old, sad Basestar; Adama has decided to transfer his flag for the operation, citing a "personal stake" in the mission. Lee will still be in command, but Adama has to be there, to pay for the sins of his survival. "A mission based on a Cylon legend," Apollo scoffs, but Adama, the atheist, the unbeliever, the Liar of Earth, knows it's no such thing. While the Cylon have forgotten the Guardian, forgotten the nativity of their God, Adama has been there, has seen it all happening. "I saw what they did to make it. We're not gonna let this happen again. Not to our own people." Lee ten-huts to the mission and heads out to plan the attack with Shaw; Roslin holds him back a moment: "I'm afraid that brings us to another matter. Commander."

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Shaw explains her plan: Pegasus will jump into the Guardian swarm, drawing them away at sublight speeds like a bird with a broken wing. Then her strike team jumps in, feet on the ground, with Starbuck flying the Raptor -- "No other pilot I can trust to pull this off," Shaw says, not begrudgingly -- which will then be destroyed. After wiping up the Basestar with a nuke, they'll send for extraction. Lee sees the value, and the Cainness of the plan, but brings up Roslin's concern from the last scene: "The President believes that under Admiral Cain you were involved in an incident aboard a civilian transport called Scylla. An incident in which ten people were executed. It is true?" Of course she was there, she was there for all of it. She's the Razor. Kendra remembers the Scylla again, without the drugs to push it away: how she came to in the midst of terror, people scrambling away from the Pegasus team, Laird staring at her, watching his life get burned away one friend and fellow at a time. "I was there. Guessing that's enough to indict me."

Lee wonders why she didn't list Scylla among her sins, and she looks him in the eye: "You said you wanted to send a message to this ship's crew, about respecting Cain's legacy? I am Cain's legacy. I'm alive because of the choices she made. So is everyone else on this ship. Tell you something else? Cain wouldn't have blinked twice at this plan. She knew that you don't win battles,

never mind wars, without risking lives." She offers her resignation, and he shakes his head. "It'd be easier, wouldn't it? Then you can go back to peeling potatoes, wallowing in self-pity, because poor Kendra Shaw is the only officer in the Fleet who's ever had to make a hard call. Well, it's not gonna fly, Major. Not while I'm in command. The plan's risky, but right now you're the only game in town. So complete your mission, Major. Your plan's approved." It would be easier, to go back to the kitchens, spend every day laboring to keep her compatriots fed, sticking oblivion in her neck at every opportunity, but that's not the easiest thing she can think of. The easiest thing she can think of is even less than that.

Kendra goes down to the kitchens and finds herself alone; she goes to the canister but first turns on the radio, flipping through frequencies, listening to life. The Adriatic calls across the oceans to the Demetrius. Genius Doctor Gaius Baltar is being interviewed, asked questions about the issues of the day. "A lot of once thought of Pegasus as the answer to our prayers. Were they wrong?"

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After the fake attack on the fake relay station, the numbers are these: 816 dead, 121 injured, 32 Vipers destroyed, 61 badly damaged. Not enough parts to repair them all. That's a sign that the Scylla is coming. Helena admits to Kendra that it's a high price for a tactically insignificant victory, but a CO and XO are a team, neither of them blunt instruments; Kendra can't be hearing this from her now, so she lends her back some of that strength she's been taking from her. Not after all that Helena's lost and continues to lose. "I wouldn't say it's insignificant, sir. I'd say we've put the enemy on notice. The price we paid is my fault." How so? "I gave her...it...my access codes." Pronouns, remember that? Remember how you never knew if Sharon was a person today or not? They're learning. "It must have used them to override our security lockouts." That's exactly what Gina did: use true names, to override security. Any Six: she sees the truth, the heart of the thing, and rips it out. It feels like this: the camera pulls back just enough so we see that this whole conversation is taking place at the interrogation window outside Gina's cell.

"No, you gave it something far more important than that. You

gave it your trust, as did I. But this thing really knows how to manipulate human emotions, preys on them." Lieutenant Thorne enters, causing Helena's skin to crawl; Kendra shrinks back just the tiniest bit. His back is strong. "Lieutenant Thorne, I want you to interrogate our Cylon prisoner. Find out everything it knows. And since it's so adept at mimicking human feeling, I'm assuming that its software is vulnerable to them as well, so..." Helena swallows. She could only love Gina if Gina loved her back; if she was created to be loved. Only if Gina loved her, like Caprica loves Gaius, like Gaius loved Felix, only if it's real, does this make sense. She doesn't question Gina's love, but she considers her imperative. If Gina loves her, if Gina has tunneled through the security, if even after Belzen Gina still got in there, then they can track her back, follow that love back to its source. It becomes an asset. "Pain, yes. Of course... Degradation, fear. Shame. I want you to really test its limits." The infinite sadness in her eyes as she does this thing, this unforgivable and necessary thing. She can't ask her crew to do anything she's not prepared to do, so she's going to do it. Belzen, and now Gina, to prove to them and herself that it's possible to become a razor. What did [Carolanne's ghost](#) say? Something about unassailable façades, how you have to recognize the inhumanity with which you're automatically gifted when they hand you your command. "Be as creative as you need to be." Thorne enters Gina's cell; she is still strong. Her will as she looks up at him is strong. He makes a fist.

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Helena and Kendra are called back to CIC, where a fleet of civilian ships are broadcasting Colonial signatures. Fisk is overjoyed, for a moment. Full of joy. They are not alone. Fifteen ships, he giggles, and the CAP already on an intercept. And as he's laughing, Cain is thinking. "Lieutenant, I want you to contact those ships' captains. Ask them to forward their crew and passenger manifests, along with their ships' schematics, and inventory of any weapons or spare parts." Kendra nods and leaves, and Helena continues. "Colonel, I want you to assemble teams of engineers and Marines, and have them board each of those ships." Fisk's smile falls as he realizes what she's saying, but he can't form the words to ask. "We're going to take everything we need from those ships." The comms relay battle took so many hits, they don't have the parts to fix the things they've got. You can't fight a war without planes, jumps, guns, munitions. You can't fight or win a war without

weapons, without personnel. "Once they'll realize our intent, there's bound to be resistance, so we need to act quickly and decisively. Colonel, if you have a problem with any of this, I need to hear it now." Fisk's weakness is a swallowed "No," and everyone gets to work.

Fisk and Shaw and their Marines take a Raptor to the Scylla; they board in slow motion, on a death mission, among flashing lights and huddled innocence; Laird welcomes them with open arms, the answer to his prayers; the last time the Cylons found them, they lost four ships. He thinks this is the end of those losses. Fisk hands Laird, poor sweet skinny Mr. Laird, the requisitions for transfer to Pegasus: parts, materials, passengers. "Effective immediately. Your name is on the list." You can't drag a civilian Fleet through war when you don't know the enemy's strengths or weaknesses; this latest failure proves that well enough. If you are the war, if you are the razor, you take what you get and you go on.

Gideon was one of the shoftim, the magistrates after whom the Book of Judges is named. "Judge" is an inexact translation; it's more like a war king, somebody who, in time of strife, collapses the separated powers and assumes leadership of the tribe. The [Gideon Massacre](#) happened when Tigh, at his wit's end, with no President and no Commander in sight, assumed the role of shofet. Men died for coffee; they've died for worse. The Olympic Carrier was sacrificed on that altar as well. Laird doesn't know about any of this -- how it could be happening right now, for all we know -- and he doesn't know about Helena, or Cain's Law. "Wait. You want to take our FTL drives," he says, scanning the lists. "We'll be helpless." They already were. "You're gonna decide just like that who lives and who dies?" Fisk dances around the questions and considers his imperative: "You have to understand. We're at war. Military need must take priority." Laird complains, loudly, and among the shouts of the Scylla, Kendra steps up, burns off a little more. "Listen! All of you! We have orders to transfer the crewmen, and the equipment on that list, to Pegasus. We have no wish to harm anyone, but we will use force if necessary." Everybody in that room knows it will be necessary, but nobody can believe it. They surge.

On Pegasus, Helena and Gina are looking at each other, through glass. It could be a mirror. Gina's covered in blood; she's beginning to weep as the phone rings, ship-to-ship from Fisk, out of his element and wondering what to do. Not enough razor to get it done, not enough shoftim to lead. "Sir, they're denying us access to the rest of the ship. We're not dealing with just individuals, sir. We have full families here." Full families: true names. I mean to say that Helena Cain stares into the eyes of her lover, through glass and blood, and puts "family" on the list of things that don't signify. She will never ask you to do anything that she wouldn't do first herself. That she hasn't already done, on CIC and down here in the brig. "Then tell them you'll shoot the families of any selectee who doesn't comply. Just get it done." She puts family on the altar and her own goes first. She couldn't have told him this from any other room in the whole ship.

To me, "crazy" means losing a sense of right and wrong, or losing the ability to consider yourself rationally, to be conscious of the decisions you are making, to be unrooted from the world. This isn't crazy. This is the only sanity she has left. Helena Cain was a lot of things, but never rabid. I don't think she ever goes crazy, frankly. I think her madness keeps her sane, because these are decisions: logical, tactical. Built of the raw materials of her life, her orphaned childhood, her inability to step off the treadmill and rejoin humanity. It's a sad story -- war drives woman to insanity, suicidal actions, crimes of war and perversion -- but I don't think that's the story we're watching. I think the scariest thing here is that she stays sane throughout: she has to watch herself do these things, and believe in them. Battlestar Galactica is, at its heart, a story about crossing boundaries: from "us" to "them," over and over. Like how Hemingway said you can only write about America in Paris? You can only look back and define humanity once you move past it. You can only see the Cylons for what they are when you cross the line into love, or humanity, or that particular loneliness that only humans know.

Helena and her crew have been the dark mirror, the "them," for so long it's easy to sit back and think we've heard all these stories before, but to me, it's a rather radical retelling, in which plot points stay the same but the entire emotional landscape is upended around it: this is a story told almost entirely through Michelle Forbes's eyes, Tricia Helfer's fearful and compassionate and loving smile, in the firm set of Stephanie Jacobsen-Chaves's

mouth and the stillness of her every muscle. Through the strength of these three performances, we are being asked, once again, to cross from "us" to "them." We are asked, in their grace, and in the quiet power of the script: Michael Taylor, again, is the poet in the bunch; he always tells you less, so that the story tells you more. If anything, I'd say this story's faults lie in complete opposition to those present in "Crossroads," where there was plot and more plot, explanation of what was happening, soliloquy about internal states. Nothing left for the actors to do but read their lines, nothing left for the viewer to do but sit at home, infantilized in the same emotional simplicity and Cliff's-Notes lack of variation or subtlety that has characterized science fiction television and film since the genre began.

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My bias shows because I don't consider it a weakness here, personally, but you have to find your audience and bring them with you, and I don't think Razor did that, for everybody. I think it sucks for precisely the same reason that it is awesome: it's a story told in a foreign language, of inference and emotion, social dynamic and philosophical implication, set against plot, plot, plot that we already know, start to finish. That we've been trained, by SF TV through the ages, to expect to have explained to us with vaudevillian, commedia dell'arte specificity. "This backstory signifies because, look, Cain is crying while she's alone. See? She totally just explained aloud how it happened; she clicked the narrative closed like a box so you don't have to do any of the work yourself. Don't you see the development? See, how a crazy lesbian will always kill everybody? See, how a woman scorned is so emotional and irrational that women in power will always fall, raving and frothing?" If "Crossroads" was like having your steak cut up for you into tiny pieces, like a good little boy or girl, or chewed and regurgitated onto your plate, Razor is more like being handed an entire live chicken. And this on top of Jacobsen-Chaves's dead-eyed lock on Shaw's every movement, her graceful stillness and shell-shocked resistance to emotion, the opposite of acting, almost -- and on top of that, it's asking us to do the impossible, once again: To love even the Pegasus, for what war requires. We can only understand Helena at this point in the story because it's only now that we have seen people do this and come back. Helena never loses control like Kara did in the New Caprica Detention Center, and never believed she could

come back, so she didn't. That's the saddest part, to me. Nobody ever wanted to be a villain and nobody ever wanted to kill: they got there by cruel fate, and they must be loved.

Fisk's protests die and he tells the Marines to line them up. "We have orders...to shoot the families of any selectee who refuses to return with us. We will carry out this order." Always orders, with Fisk: always what she tells him to do, and nothing before that point. Is he more of a hero, for waiting until he's told? Does that moment of hesitation earn him any points in the hereafter? Is he less of a monster for waiting until his hand is forced? Or just less of a razor? Is this a gift from Cain, too? Laird protests and a bottle crashes, and something happens, and it's over. We don't see what happens and we don't know what it is, but when it's done, Kendra is a razor.

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Now, she shifts through the frequencies, down in the kitchen, remembering Scylla, the rock on which she was sharpened and forged. Raptor 359er hails and docks on Colonial One, over the radio. Kendra opens the canister and pulls out her needle, to forget. Greenleaf lands on Galactica, over the airwaves. She aims her needle and Kara appears, bashing a bottle down at the other end of the table, startling Kendra. Kara smiles that one scary smile, the sexy one that you know means RUN. "So, the XO is human after all. I used to do that myself...scrum through the wireless band -- reminds you you're not alone out here. Got any more?" This last offhand, casual, Kara's teeth like razors. More of what? "What you're about to stick in your neck," duh. "Whatever floats your boat, right? I came down here looking for a loose bottle, you came down here for... Guess we both just try to take the edge off, right?" Kendra sighs: Kara doesn't get it. You can't take the edge off. That's the point of the edge.

"I'd hate to think Lee's new XO can't handle the pressure," Kara warns. "Maybe you want to get busted back to peeling potatoes." Kendra offers that it would be a similar shame if "Lee's" favorite pilot ended up scrubbing floors for pilfering ship stores. Men died for coffee on the Gideon; "pilfering ships" is a matter of perspective. Kara agrees to keep the secret, if Kendra keeps hers; Kendra has no way of knowing that Kara is still a year or two from learning about the existence of consequences. This is a

power game and nothing more. Kara leaves, and Kendra puts her stash back, and flips the freqs again. Unconfirmed reports continue to attribute President Roslin's recent miraculous recovery. But Kara's point is made: Kendra listens and does not move, doesn't open up that can again. She weeps, for herself and for the Scylla, but she doesn't step back from memory.

"I've seen officers happier about a promotion," Helena says, and Kendra protests that she is happy, for that. She makes the mistake of wondering aloud how she possibly could have earned it. "Don't, Captain. Don't do it. Don't look back. Sometimes, we have to leave people behind, so that we can go on. So that we can continue to fight." Jürgen Belzen, Gina Inviere, Mrs. Laird, Blue Squadron. "Sometimes, we have to do things that we never thought we were capable of, if only to show the enemy our will." Blind jump, comms relay, the cannibalizing of the civilian Fleet. Gina again, most terribly.

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"Yesterday, you showed me that you were capable of setting aside your fear, setting aside your hesitation, and even your revulsion. Every natural inhibition that during battle can mean the difference between life and death. When you can be this? For as long as you have to be? Then you're a razor." She holds up her knife. It is a gift. "This war is forcing us all to become razors. Because if we don't, we don't survive. And then we don't have the luxury of becoming simply human again. Do you understand me?" Do you understand yourself? Becoming simply human again isn't a luxury, it's your fucking mandate. You get better or you die. But nobody wants the embarrassment of absolution. When Helena Cain dies, her last words... What if what she really meant, all along, were just this? "Frak you, for hurting me so badly that I couldn't turn back."

Now, on the radio, we shed those luxuries: President Roslin's issued an executive order outlawing abortion. She started burning things off before New Caprica was even a glimmer on the horizon. Since then, she's lined crewmen up against the wall, lied as easily as breathing, kidnapped a daughter and told her mother she was dead, conspired to subvert democracy, explicitly condoned child slavery, committed sedition and terrorism, and employed interrogational torture so far beyond the simply cruel

and unusual that I almost vomited. Forgiven.

Now, Starbuck and Shaw's SAR team gets close to the experimental base, even as the Pegasus is taking heavy fire and leading the Guardian Raiders away. The team ejects, and blows out to the base. Their Raptor is destroyed. And the funny Guardians, at the helms of their funny Raiders: the boss says, in a funny computer voice, "Enemy target destroyed. All wings regroup and continue pursuit of Battlestar Pegasus." And you already know what the rest of them say: Amen. "By your command."

Red Squad finds their way in through an airlock, and establish comms with Pegasus, and head inside. Kendra and Kara, Gunny Matthias (hi!) and two more Marines, Hudson and DaSilva. Hudson smartasses around, and DaSilva finds the heat signatures of the captured science team. Somebody's carrying a nuclear bomb, into the abandoned nativity; puts it down casually as they draw their weapons and press on into the silence. At the junction, they form up, and kick down a door: people, humans, civilians and Marines, tied to tables, bleeding. They free them, the ones that are left, and get into a firefight with the Guardians; the Adamas listen over wireless as DaSilva is hit. The Guardians, still operating by their simple mandate -- their imperative, I mean to say, to turn machines into men -- begin to drag him off to the experiments, and Shaw raises her gun immediately. Kara screams, but it's too late, and Shaw shoots him; she's hit immediately after and goes down.

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Two civilians, one man down, and two wounded, including Shaw; the group is pinned. That is, of course, when the signal starts jamming all over the place. Also lost during the fight: the nuke's detonator. Matthias tries to get it working, but Starbuck's more interested in freaking out about how Kendra just totally shot their own guy in the gut. Kara doesn't understand razors and she won't for a long time; Lee's already halfway there. "I'll not allow them taking any more prisoners, Captain. You saw what they were doing in there." Kara agrees, she did. But Cain's Law demands that you do what's necessary; Kara's never anybody take so few steps to get from the temple to the altar. Not even her mom -- dead of cancer, strong of will -- would have pulled that gun so

fast. Kara's life is actively resisting becoming a razor, because she too thinks she couldn't come back, so Pegasus -- where rules aren't ever broken or bent, where you can't even sit in a chair while you're drinking yourself silly, where you can't even drink -- is the worst of several possible worlds, at once. Pegasus is an environment that cannot sustain the kind of life at which Kara excels; it's the razor line of difference between Kara, who returns from the underworld again and again, and Kendra, who doesn't. Who spends every moment afterward waiting to die, like Helena; suspended in half-life, between the needle and the razor.

Apollo orders ship-to-ship missiles to readiness: if this mission fails, if Starbuck falls, they will complete their mission. I mean to say that Lee Adama, confronted with untenable options, considers his imperative. When humanity itself is twisted, on a mechanical rack, in the dead of space, the price to us all is too high. When human and machine are being twisted together, in horror and death, it would be better to lose a thousand men than to allow it to continue. Of course, Adama would move heaven and earth, and has more than once, to save Starbuck's sorry ass, so he gets very nervous at this juncture. "We have to give them a chance!" Even with comms jammed, the LT down, the bomb failing, Adama always chooses more life, the lie of Earth, the final hope. But Lee sees more sharply, and does the things his father cannot do: this is a gift. On the ship, Kara slaps Kendra awake and calls out to Lee, again and again. Under heavy fire, Kendra wakes up again in a corridor, with a razor by her side. Slapping her into wakefulness: the sharp pain of Cain's Law. "Destroying that ship with people on board is our last resort," says Adama, and Lee tells him to define "final resort": this is no longer a rescue mission. "Gods only know what will happen to our people if they're captured," he says, but Adama knows. "I was there." Apollo authorizes nuclear attack on the Basestar; Hoshi inserts his launch key. The Olympic Carrier is with us still. Adama belays the orders, unprepared to sacrifice their lives; if he's wrong, he'll live with it.

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"You said it yourself, Admiral. That thing may be headed toward Earth. If it jumps away, then we'll lose our only hope of taking it out." And it will pervert the future, as well as the past. War will never loosen its grip, and we will never become simply human

again. Starbuck gets through the jams, and the Adamas sigh in relief, launching the evac Raptor. Down on the ship, the detonator's complete shot. Kendra asks if Matthias can rig a manual trigger, and she can; Kara still can't even see what a razor is. Why would you do that? How do you blow up a manual nuke so everybody lives? You don't. "We are completing this mission. Am I clear, soldier?" Kara feels a chill; it's clear. "Our nuke's remote detonator is still fried. We're gonna have to cook it off by hand. Red 1 is still down for the count. Which doesn't give us many options."

On Pegasus, she's crackling on the wireless: "What are your orders, sir?" Apollo comes up with another plan: get the team off the ship with the evac bird, and then fire the missile that's burning in his pocket. But Adama sees the problem: the squad of Guardian Raiders: they'll intercept the bomb. There's no option, it's Cain's Law: somebody has to stay and arm the warhead, and set it off. Adama makes it clear that he's done meddling for today, because this is a big decision, a decision for a Commander. Which increases the pressure on Lee, of course, and where he's standing, in Pegasus's CIC, swallowing tears, there's only one answer. There was only ever one answer: "Pegasus actual. Get the XO, get your men and get to the evac coordinates. Secure your men, and detonate the warhead using the manual trigger. Complete your mission, Captain." Kara nods, turns to stone; lifts Shaw in her arms and heads toward the airlock.

Kara ushers everyone into the airlock, to get their suits on and leave for the pickup; she shoulders the nuke and shouts at Kendra, who's failing fast. Who has a gun, trained on her head. "You too, Captain. Leave the nuke, if you don't mind." Her chin up, back strong, as the life fades out of her. Kara whispers, "What the frak are you doing?" And Kendra tells her the answer she already knows: "Completing the mission." She smiles and tosses Kara the knife: "Take it. I don't need it anymore." And one day, Kara will. "Why?" asks Kara, and Kendra can't handle the innocence there, at all: "You know damn well why." And we hope she never will, but we know that's not true. She takes the nuke and sends Kara out, locking the door behind her. Kara looks through the glass at her, and salutes; Kendra salutes back. "It's been an honor, Captain." Kara begrudgingly puts on her helmet. Kendra is alone. Kendra heads in, lugging the nuke, getting

weaker. As the lights fade and brighten around her, she sees the bodies of the Scylla, in tighter and tighter shots. I mean to say the panoply of death restricts itself now, at the end of story, into people. Not assets or civilians or rioters or proof: just people, with hands and faces. The Hybrid speaks, like the voice of God, reverberating through the ship: "All this has happened before and will happen again." Kendra aims her gun at an open door. "Come in, Major. I've been waiting for you for a long time."

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He is old, this Hybrid. Infirm, once beautiful. He lies in a resurrection tank, wires trailing away into the darkness. "You're what all this is about," Kendra realizes. "What are you?" What is he? Just a man. "Or am I a machine? My children believe I am God." Singular. "Are you a God?" One of plural. She doesn't know, even now, what he's really saying. He's not one of the Lords of Kobol, he's the Cylon JHVH. She has no concept of monotheism, or of Hybrids, or resurrection. "I have seen things," he says, like Leoben. "Your life, Kendra Shaw. The things you have done. The things you felt you had to do. All leading to this moment. You wish to be forgiven, my child?" As we all do. As we all deserve. Kendra Shaw more than most.

"I repeat!" Fisk shouted. "We will carry out this order! We will shoot these people!" The Marines getting nervous on her left, a bottle crashing on her right, Kendra does the sensible thing, the Cain thing: takes out her gun, and shoots a woman in the head. This is the point at which we realize, she's saying, that this is not the kind of thing that's getting argued. You, Laird, you, nameless woman, are standing between humanity and extinction. You are putting yourself inside the firing solution. When I shoot you, to save time, it's only because you're in the way: I'm shooting at the black abyss on the other side of you, the darkness razors were made to slice and defy. You put yourself between the temple and the altar, and when I shoot you, it's because you are already dead. You want the will to meaning? This is the only meaning there is: at the end of the world, there are the dead and the living. The dead lie down, ignore the darkness, live on wishes and dreams and hopes, in a belief in fairness, that lives don't end this way. The living shout at the darkness, run on treadmills, faster and faster, but they don't lie down and they don't give in, and sometimes that's the only weapon you have. I'm not killing you,

I'm killing the next opportunity for night to take the human race forever. I'm just striking myself against the rock and into the hard places, proving to everyone in this room that we won't be fighting this out today. And what follows, the massacre that follows: that's just them firing into the darkness too. That's all we're ever doing.

"Do you wish to be forgiven?" She chokes back tears, her eyes coming alive. Back into the life she's been blunting with her needle. Nobody wants the embarrassment of absolution, but at the end of line, you can lay it down and be forgiven. Kendra Shaw weeps. "Yes." Then, he beckons, "Come closer. There's something I have to tell you. Come." It's hard to walk; there's blood along her mouth. He grabs her hand, like Husker so long ago, and he tells her a new vision.

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"Kara Thrace will lead the human race to its end. She is the herald of the Apocalypse. The harbinger of death. They must not follow her."

Hoshi reports that the Raptor is inbound, with Kara onboard, leaving Kendra behind. Apollo's shocked: surely Kara wouldn't make that call. Kendra radios in: "Actual. This is Red 1. Come in." She tries to warn him, to pass along the message, to deliver the testimony, but the wireless jams up again. "I gotta warn you. It's Captain Thrace..." And she's gone.

"As my own existence comes to a close," the Hybrid says, "only to begin anew, in ways...uncertain." Kendra almost smiles at him; smiles into the calm, dying face of an infirm God. "You're scared, aren't you, motherfrakker? You should be." Not scared, just uncertain: God is not a razor. God is the rock, and the hard place, everywhere and nowhere at once, but he's not a razor and he's not a needle. That's a secret not even the Cylon know yet. The end of humanity: sounds frightening, doesn't it? Ask Hera, ask Nicky. Ask Laura and Athena, Gaius and Caprica, the Final Four, Kara Thrace: the end of humanity is not the end of everything. It's the beginning of something yet to come. Ask Helena and Kendra: the end of humanity was their personal imperative. Down on New Caprica, Kara will become a razor; for a year she can't get out, so she turns into something else. Forgiven. Up in the Circle of the Second Exodus, Saul will become a razor, tearing out

his own heart and killing it, in mercy. Forgiven. But Saul and Kara disprove Cain's Law: they come back. In the arms of Sam and Saul and Lee they come back. Taken apart in the unfolding, they reassemble their lives and become more than human. I don't think it's a coincidence that they are rewarded with light -- that mere humanity is only a stopping place on the way to becoming what they always were, which is more than simply human. Hammered into light on the angel's anvil, and burnt pure again. Your life is a story told by nobody but you: for Kendra and Helena, for Gina and Kat, the punchline of that story they were writing was death, end of line. But we know a better ending yet.

Kendra arms the nuke, and it pulses up, and God begins to sing. "All this has happened before, and will happen again. Again. Again. Again. Again. Again. Again. Again. Again. Again." His voice rising, twinning with the scream of the bomb, a breakaway song that only they two can hear. And it goes, and God and Major Kendra Shaw are taken apart in light. Kara watches from the Raptor, in the sky, and weeps.

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The ambrosia flows freely on Galactica, on Olympus, where Zeus has returned; his son is tired and ready to sleep, and to forget the razor he nearly became. "Starbuck was here a little earlier. She's recommended Major Shaw for a posthumous commendation." Apollo nods. "She wasn't looking for medals." Adama knows that. "But I've been going through Cain's logs, and from a tactical perspective, it's hard to find a fault in anything that she did, or that Kendra did." The butchery of innocent civilians? How can Adama ignore that? But there's a difference between tactics and ethics, between thinking and feeling. One day Lee will understand that: the whole trial will hinge on it, and Adama will eventually side with his son. But for now, Commander Apollo is hurt and confused, too afraid of Cain's Law to hear his father speaking. "I know that I didn't have to face any of the situations that she did. I had the President in my face, arguing for the survival of the civilian Fleet. I had Colonel Tigh to keep me honest, balancing my morality and my tactics. And I had you. Now, you don't have any children, so you might not understand this, but you see yourself reflected in their eyes. And there are some things that I thought of doing, with this Fleet. But I stopped myself, because I knew that I'd have to face you the following day." Because he wasn't an

orphan; because he was lucky enough to have a family all around him. Because he saw himself reflected in Kara's eyes, and could not sacrifice her on that altar.

"If you hadn't been in CIC, I would have ordered that strike. Kara would be dead, so would the rest of the team." True. Forgiven. "You did nothing wrong, neither did I. We both made decisions that we had to, to accomplish our missions." So were Cain and Kendra wrong? Context is everything, Adama said once. They were alone at the end of the world, betrayed by logic and reason and love. "If I believed in the Gods, I'd say they'll be judged by a high power." But since Adama doesn't believe, not yet: "Then history will have to make its judgments. And since history's first draft will be written in our logs...well, I guess I've got some writing to do." Lee leaves without having touched his drink. "You'll write that commendation?" Of course he will. And it will be beautiful, because Lee Adama lives every day between the temple and the altar. Because months ago, the world changed. Everyone's lives changed, forever. Because they found themselves shouldering responsibilities they never thought they'd have. Because duty, honor, and service are more than words: they're the guiding principles for those who serve in the military, and for everyone else. He leaves, and Bill slugs his drink, and it is stiff. It burns his throat. This is a gift.

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Starbuck plays with the knife, flipping it open and clicking it closed: "Not a lot to show for a life, huh?" You're born, you live, and you die. Lee nods. "Guess not. Do you have any idea why she did it?" Kara tells the part of the story she's learned so far: "Maybe she thought she had a lot to answer for." Or maybe she just had it coming. "We've all got it coming," Lee says, and she clicks it closed, like a box. "You might as well hear this from me. I've asked to be reassigned to Galactica. You might say that I've a beef with my commanding officer." They grin at each other; Kara needs to get off this ship before the blood and screams in the walls tear her apart. She's looked into that darkness, and seen the razor's line between herself and Kendra; she's fallen in love with Cain, and made bad choices. Lee put himself into her firing solution, once, and she broke her own heart on it. "Motherfrakker keeps trying to get me killed!" Lee wonders if she deserves it, too. "Oh! Speak for yourself, Lee, I have a destiny. Had my palm

read by a Cylon, remember?" By the Cylon that knows the Hybrids best; that sees the stream and the way we all dream it, the way it goes around and around. "Calypso" means "concealer"; the Apocalypse is the day that the door opens and you walk through it, and everything is revealed as it really is. The Cylons stop projecting, the humans stop projecting, Chip Gaius and Chip Six stop moving us all around like chess pieces, and we see the board for what it is. You're born, you live, and you make decisions, and at the end you are those choices: that's what the Apocalypse means. It happens every day. "A destiny," Lee laughs. "Right." "I guess you're stuck with me till the end. I gotta go break in your new CAG, sir." She flips the knife and grins, lovely, and goes off to meet her replacement. Lee thinks, and walks away, and the space he leaves is empty.

"I only knew Admiral Cain for a short time, so what I have to say about her will be short. She faced things. She looked them right in the eye and she didn't flinch. That's something that we do a lot around here: we second-guess, we worry. When I think about what she went through after the attack -- all alone, one ship, no help, no hope -- she didn't give up. She didn't worry. She didn't second-guess. She acted. She did what she thought needed to be done, and the Pegasus survived. Might be hard to admit, or hard to hear, but I think that we were safer with her than we are without." -- Captain Kara "Starbuck" Thrace, Serial #462753. Razor. Forgiven. Harbinger of the Apocalypse, when all the veils are taken away, and everything becomes what it always was.

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"Our first responsibility is to the survival of humanity." -- President Laura Roslin, as quoted by Lee Adama, Civilian. Forgiven. Forgiven.

You're born, you live and you die. When you're born, you get a name, a secret true name that nobody else knows. You spend that lifetime learning it, the angles and curves of it; you learn to inhabit it, you learn who you are. You become acquainted with its delicacy, its beauty, the lapidary outline of a soul. And sometimes, when things are bad, fate asks you to put that name away, somewhere safe, locked up tight, so that it will stay clean. Behind a door in a room you never knew about. There are no do-overs. No second chances to make things right if you frak them

up the first time. You make your choices and you live with them, and in the end, you are those choices. And if you believe your name is gone forever, that your hands are too dirty to retrieve it, you could fool yourself that it's gone forever. That you've given it away and damned yourself. I don't agree. Innocent is not the same as not guilty, and fixed is not the same as unbroken. The day everything gets so terribly awesome that you can rest forever, without a single rough patch coming on the road: that's a long wait. Best to take your chance when you can, to reclaim the light inside what you are, and what you've proven capable of becoming. To make the long walk back, from the altar to the temple. Better to find the best ending possible; to hit the end of line and skip down to the next, to straddle that salt, that end of line, like poetry. Better to hear the angel, begging you to step across: into the new shape, into the story to come. Again, again, again.

You're born, you live and you die. This is a gift.